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SUBJECT: HOKIM OF JIZZAKH PROVINCE QUIETLY REPLACED

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) On February 18, Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyaev went to Jizzakh and, according to a presidential decree, released Musa Anarbaev of his duties as Hokim of Jizzakh Province. Mirziyaev appointed Makhmud Parsamatovich Holbutayev to take his place. Before this assignment Holbutayev used to serve as Hokim of the Dustlik District within Jizzakh and then First Deputy Hokim of Jizzakh Province.

¶2. (SBU) Mirziyaev is a native of Jizzakh who himself previously served as Hokim of Jizzakh Province from 1996 to 2001. President Karimov typically presides over these regional meetings when hokims are fired and replaced, and it is significant that he sent his Prime Minister to take care of business in his old stomping grounds. The provincial council meetings are also typically reported in the state press, but in this case only the independent news site www.uznews.net reported the information (first on February 18 and then on March 4). This website has often reported unsubstantiated information, but our LES Political Assistant confirmed with multiple Jizzakh sources over the past two weeks that Holbutayev is the new Hokim.

¶3. (SBU) Our Political Assistant also spoke casually with neighbors (that include a former police official in Jizzakh) and Jizzakh residents in a hospital waiting room about the new Hokim's reputation. Apparently, the farmers of the province intensely dislike Holbutayev from his previous leadership positions in Jizzakh and accuse him of setting unreasonable production quotas and treating them as serfs. This tracks with information published by uznews.net about his poor reputation with the locals, and an article on the website reported the Hokim held an ill-natured meeting with farmers on February 26 to discuss debts for fuel supplies as well as cotton and grain quotas.

Comment:

¶4. (SBU) Our Political Assistant believes Holbutayev is probably keen on impressing officials in Tashkent in the hopes of following Mirziyaev's upward trajectory to Tashkent and could not care less what the local farmers think. Holbutayev may also want to demonstrate that, like his heavy-handed predecessors in Jizzakh, he can keep the farmers in their place. Our Political Assistant also noted that Jizzakh farmers are known to be particularly outspoken and resistant dating back to the pre-Bolshevik era. Jizzakh was also the homeland of Sharaf Rashidov, the legendary President of the Uzbek Soviet Republic who hoodwinked Moscow with false cotton production figures, much to the admiration of Uzbeks.

¶5. (SBU) Our Political Assistant also noted that several years ago Mirziyaev suggested that Karimov appoint Ubaidulla Yamankulov as a Jizzakh Hokim, who was indeed appointed and subsequently fired in favor of the outgoing Anarbaev. This could potentially make Mirziyaev himself look bad, as in the future the President could come to Jizzakh and blame Mirziyaev for promoting a long line of cronies that did not serve the interests of the province. Thus, letting Mirziyaev take care of the dirty work in Jizzakh may be a way for the ever-vigilant Karimov to ensure he has a foil in the event his Prime Minister gets too powerful.

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